

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 NIC-01

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R 191010Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 708

INFO CINCPAC

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 2153

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, RP

SUBJECT: 1975 REFERENDUM: PRESIDENT MARCOS ON CAMPAIGN TRAIL

REF: (A) CEBU 0013 (NOTAL)

(B) MANILA 2035

BEGIN SUMMARY: PRESIDENT MARCOS HAS TERMED MUSLIM RE-
BELLION "MOST SERIOUS ISSUE THAT WE FACE IN THIS REFER-
ENDUM." AND HAS APPEALED FOR MASSIVE "YES" VOTE. MARCOS
HAS REASSURED LOCAL OFFICIALS THEY WOULD NOT BE REPLACED
WITH "STRANGERS" AND CONTINUES MAKE STRONG PITCH FOR YOUTH
SUPPORT. PRESIDENT REPORTEDLY STILL CONSIDERING MODIFIED
CHURCH PROPOSALS TO ENSURE REFERENDUM'S HONESTY. GOVERNMENT
HAS ASKED SUPREME COURT DISMISS ANOTHER SUIT CHALLENGING
REFERENDUM'S CONSTITUTIONALITY. RELIGIOUS GROUPS OPPOS-
ING REFERENDUM SCHEDULED HOLD "OUTDOOR PENITENTIAL SERVICE"
IN INTRAMUROS (FEB 21), SAME DAY ORGANIZED LABOR WILL EN-
DORSE REFERENDUM AT MASS RALLY IN MANILA FOLK ARTS THEATER.

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END SUMMARY.

1. SPEAKING AT CAMPAIGN RALLY IN CEBU CITY FEB 18, PRESIDENT MARCOS CHARACTERIZED MUSLIM REBELLION "AS THE MOST SERIOUS ISSUE THAT WE FACE IN THIS REFERENDUM. I WILL BE COMPELLED TO MAKE QUICK DECISIONS ON THIS MATTER AFTER THE REFERENDUM. AND THESE DECISIONS MAY ENTAIL MORE SACRIFICE ON OUR PART." PRESIDENT STRESSED SIMILAR THEME THOUGH LESS EXPLICITLY IN SPEECH TO PHIL MILITARY ACADEMY GRADUATES IN BAGUIO FEB 17. CEBU SPEECH WAS LATEST IN SERIES OF PRESIDENTIAL SPEECHES IN COUNTRYSIDE ARGUING "YES" VOTE IN FEB 27 REFERENDUM.

2. MARCOS TOLD HIS CEBU AUDIENCE THAT HE WOULD NOT REPLACE LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS WITH STRANGERS IF REFERENDUM ALLOWS HIM TO APPOINT LOCAL OFFICIALS AT END OF THIS YEAR. DLGCD SECY RONO ELABORATED ON THIS WHEN HE TOLD CEBU AUDIENCE THAT LOCAL OFFICIALS WHO HAVE BEEN PERFORMING THEIR DUTY AND BEHAVING PROPERLY HAD "NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT" AND THAT PRESIDENT WOULD NOT EXERCISE POWER "WHIMSICALLY" WHEN DECIDING WHAT LOCAL OFFICIALS WOULD BE RETAINED.

3. IN CEBU, PRESIDENT STRESSED HIS COMMITMENT TO NATION'S YOUTH EMPHASIZING HIS DECISION ALLOW 15- YEAR OLD TO VOTE. HE SAID HE WAS GOING AROUND COUNTRY TO MEET YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARN WHAT THEY FEEL ABOUT THEIR COUNTRY AND THE NEW SOCIETY. COMPARING HIMSELF TO OLD MAN PLANTING SEEDS WHOSE FRUIT HIS CHILDREN WOULD HARVEST, PRESIDENT SAID: "FATHER OF THE DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION IS WHAT YOU MIGHT CALL ME." HE APPEALED TO YOUTH TO SUPPORT HIS NEW SOCIETY, RALLY IN FAVOR OF ADMINISTRATION AND "VOTE YES IN THE COMING REFERENDUM."

4. PRESIDENT'S CAMPAIGN APPEARANCES HAVE TAKEN PLACE AGAINST BACKGROUND OF DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS (COMELECT) AND CBCP OFFICIALS AND NEW CHALLENGE IN SUPREME COURT TO REFERENDUM'S CONSTITUTIONALITY. AFTER SESSION WITH CHURCH REPRESENTATIVES (11 BISHOPS) FEB 15, COMELEC AGREED FORWARD TO PRESIDENT CHURCH RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMITTEE TO MONITOR REFERENDUM AT LOCAL LEVEL AND TO SUSPEND PENALTIES FOR THOSE UNDER 18 NOT VOTING.
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EARLIER MARCOS HAD REJECTED PROPOSAL FOR NON-PARTISAN BODY TO CANVASS AND COUNT VOTES SINCE COMELEC CHARGED WITH THIS RESPONSIBILITY UNDER CONSTITUTION. ON FEB 18, SOLICITOR GENERAL MENDOZA REQUESTED SUPRIEME COURT TO DISMISS PETITION BY FORMER CONCON DELEGATE ASKING REFERENDUM BE DECLARED UNCONSTITUTIONAL BECAUSE OF PARTICIPATION BY THOSE UNDER 18. MENDOZA MAINTAINED COURT'S JAN 31 DECISION REJECTING AQUINO PETITION SETTLED QUESTION.

5. RELIGIOUS GROUPS OPPOSING REFERENDUM STILL SCHEDULING "OUTDOOR PENITENTIAL SERVICE" IN INTRAMUROS ON FEB 21. EXERCISE WILL TAKEFORM OF STATIONS OF THE CROSS. ORGANIZERS HAVE SENSE OF HUMOR SINCE STATION "JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS" IS SCHEDULED IN FRONT BUREAU OF INTERNAL REVENUE AND "JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS" WILL BE AT THE DEPT OF LABOR. MARCOS LOYALISTS HAVE SCHEDULED MASSIVE LABOR RALLY SAME DAY AT FOLK ARTS CENTER IN MANILA AT WHICH PRESIDENT SCHEDULED SPEAK.

6. COMMENT: PRESIDENT HAS PREVIOUSLY STRESSED THEME HE NEEDS MASSIVE NATIONAL SUPPORT TO ENABLE HIM MAKE QUICK DECISIONS AND EMPHASIZED VARIOUS CRISES FACING NATION. ONLY IN LAST TWO DAYS, HOWEVER, (AT BAGUIO AND IN CEBU) HAS HE LINKED MUSLIM REBELLION AND REFERENDUM. EXACTLY WHAT PRESIDENT MAY HAVE IN MIND IN SO DOING IS UNCLEAR. DEFENSE SECRETARY ENRILE EVIDENTLY DID NOT GET WORD ON LATEST CAMPAIGN STRATEGY SINCE ON SAME DAY MARCOS SPOKE IN CEBU, ENRILE TOLD ECUMENICAL LUNCHEON: "FIRST LET ME EMPHASIZE THAT THE PRESIDENT'S PRONOUNCEMENTS ON MINDANAO HAVE NOTHING ABSOLUTELY TO DO WITH THE REFERENDUM, HE WOULD HAVE DONE THE SAME WITH OR WITHOUT THE REFERENDUM." MARCOS' PROMISE TO RETAIN LOCAL OFFICIALS WHO ARE PERFORMING WELL AND NOT APPOINT "STRANGERS" SHOULD PROVIDE MANY OF THESE OFFICIALS AND THEIR PROSPECTIVE SUCCESSORS WITH INCENTIVE TO GET OUT THE VOTE AND DELIVER RESULTS MARCOS WANTS. PRESIDENT'S APPEARANCES IN COUNTRYSIDE, REMINISCENT OF HIS PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGNS SUGGEST MARCOS HAS BECOME MORE CONFIDENT ABOUT HIS PERSONAL SECURITY. HE MAY ALSO BE HOPING TO SATISFY THE PUBLIC'S APPETITE FOR THE FUN AND EXCITEMENT MANY STILL ASSOCIATE WITH OLD SOCIETY ELECTION CAMPAIGNS.

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